REMARKS

Claims 8-16 remain pending after amendment.

Claim Amendments

By this amendment, claims 1-7 are cancelled and new claims 8-16 added. Claims 8-14 correspond to cancelled claims 1-7. Support for new claim 15 resides at page 16, lines 15-18 of the specification. Support for new claim 16 resides at page 29, lines 11-14 and Table 1 of the specification. No new matter is added by this amendment.

The Claimed Invention

Applicants' invention is directed to a cylindrical printing blanket comprising a seamless sleeve and a sheet-like blanket having a fabric layer, a compressive layer and a surface printing layer, said sheet-like blanket being bonded onto the outer surface of said seamless sleeve. In a preferred embodiment, a layer of a spirally wound thread in an adhesive is used to bond the blanket to the sleeve. Applicants' invention is neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art.

Rejection under 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okubo et al U.S. Patent No. 5,832,824.

In support of the rejection, the Examiner takes the following position:

> "Okuba et al teaches a cylindrical printing blanket that comprises a seamless sleeve (Fig. 1, 21) is to prevent a liquid from permeating through the end faces and is filled with a compressive elastomer, a sheet like blanket having a fabric layer (Fig. 1), a compressive layer and a surface printing layer (Fig. 1,2). A bonded thread layer formed by winding a thread in spiral on a sleeve (col. 4, lines 4-6) via an adhesive layer (Fig. 1, 31) and is groove generated)."

This rejection respectfully is traversed to the extent deemed to apply to the claims as amended.

Okubo et al was initially brought to the Examiner's attention in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on December 7, 2000. Okubo et al is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent application Serial No. 08/600,604 which is based on Japanese application No. 7-28312. This application was laid open on August 27, 1996 as Japanese published unexamined application No. 8-216548. Reference is made to this published application in Comparative Example 2 of the instant specification (see description bridging pages 42-43), with the

method of Example 3 of Okubo et al being carried out in Comparative Example 2.

More specifically, Okubo et al discloses a printing blanket which comprises a cylindrical sleeve 21 having placed thereon in order a base layer 1, a porous compressible layer 2 and a non-stretchable thread layer 3 and a surface printing layer 4. The base layer is stated to be an "elastomer" layer (column 4, lines 16-26).

By contrast, the claimed invention comprises a sheet-like blanket having a thread layer 4 (in a preferred embodiment), fabric layers 5a, 5a and 5a, a compressive layer 6, a fabric layer 5b and a surface printing rubber layer 7 bonded to the outer surface of a cylindrical sleeve 2 (see Figs. 1, 2). Okubo et al fails to suggest providing a sheet-like blanket of such a configuration on a seamless sleeve. Indeed, the reference fails to disclose or suggest the substitution of the fabric layer of applicants' invention for the elastomer base layer of the reference.

It is thus apparent from a comparison of the respective blankets that the following distinctions exist between the same:

(1) Applicants' claimed blanket has fabric layers instead of the base layer of Okubo et al;

(2) Okubo et al has a non-stretchable layer (the thread layer) between the compressive layer and the surface printing layer. Such non-stretchable layer is not essential in the present invention, and the fabric layer 5b can be incorporated instead as shown at Figs.1 and 2. In the case that the thread layer is employed in the present invention, the layer can be formed by winding a thread in spiral configuration on a sleeve via an adhesive elastomer, an embodiment which is distinct from the teachings of Okubo et al.

Further, the claimed blanket possesses advantages not otherwise possessed by the blanket of Okubo et al. The Examiner's attention is directed to the comparative data at Tables 8 and 9 of the instant specification. As discussed above, Comparative Example 2 in the present specification corresponds to the method of Example 3 of Okubo et al. The results of Comparative Example 2 are discussed at page 45 of the specification as follows:

> "In Table 8, Comparative Example 2 that is the cylindrical printing blanket of the prior art experienced quicker setting of the upper layer due to creep since the thread layer formed over the compressive layer and below the printing layer by winding the thread while applying tension generates a compressive stress in the layers below the

> compressive layer. The cylindrical printing blanket of the present invention, on the other hand, does not experience early set in fatigue since the compressive layer is not subject to excessive stress. Comparison of the amount of set in fatigue is shown in Fig. 3".

In view of the above distinctions that exist between the respective inventions, and given the advantages over the cited prior art demonstrated to exist in the comparative data presented in the specification, the rejection is without basis and should be withdrawn.

The application is now believed to be in condition for allowance and an early indication of same is earnestly solicited.

In the event that any outstanding matters remain in this application, Applicants request that the Examiner contact James W. Hellwege (Reg. No. 28,808) at (703) 205-8000 to discuss such matters.

Applicant respectfully petitions under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) and 1.17 for a two-month extension of time in which to respond to the Examiner's Office Action. The Extension of Time Fee in the amount of $ 390.00 is attached hereto.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit

any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Very truly yours,

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